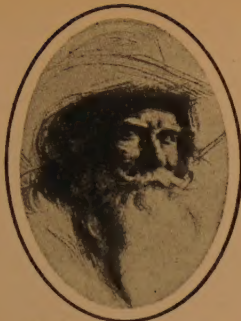
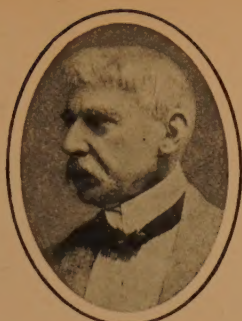




WILL CARLETON



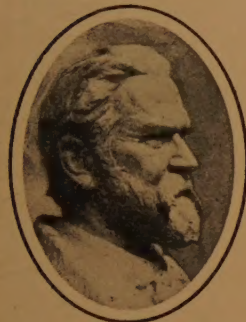
JOAQUIN MILLER



BRET HARTE



EUGENE FIELD

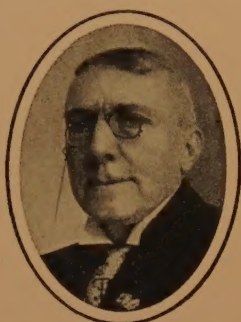


EDWIN MARKHAM

# AMERICAN POETS OF THE SOIL

By **BURGES JOHNSON**

*Assistant Professor of English,  
Vassar College*



JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



THE MENTOR · DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE · SERIAL No. 111

## MENTOR GRAVURES

WILL CARLETON · JOAQUIN MILLER · BRET HARTE · EUGENE FIELD  
EDWIN MARKHAM · JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

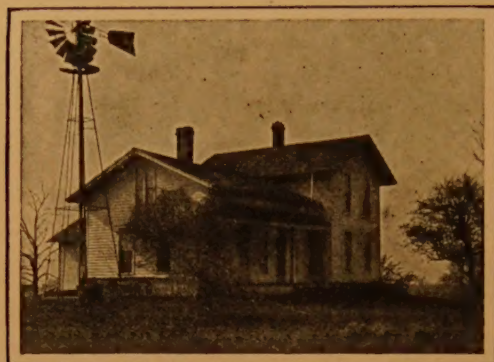
**T**HERE is a new group of poets today, we are told, who have forsaken the old ruts. They scorn the traditional poetic vocabulary, even the conventional rhymes and rhythms, and hew a new path to the heights. Many of these futurist poets clothe a mystic thought in rude or homely phrase.

There was a school of poets, and their laurels are still green, who followed in all the ruts, if you will, of rhythm and rhyme, but sang of rude or homely themes. If that old school were dead, it would be because the homely themes are gone, and there are no poetic emotions to be stirred save the mystic and the complex!

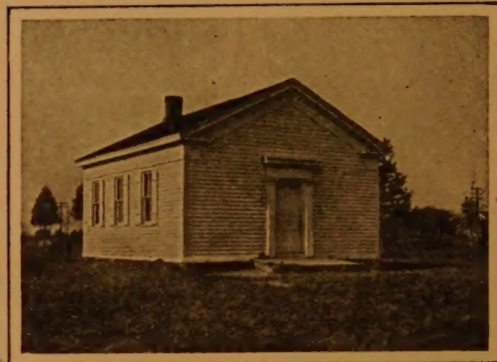
Who were our elder poets of the soil? Whittier might be called one of them, and Lowell and Longfellow, and certainly Whitman. But these names have been placed in a higher list. They found their themes throughout humanity, and all humanity has listened to their voices.

We have in mind a group less widely famed, who found their inspiration in the life immediately about them. One sang of the farm, and one of the mines; this one of the mountains, and that one of boyhood in the prairie towns, interpreting the hearts of their own people so truly that they, too, found an answering chord in hearts far beyond their narrow

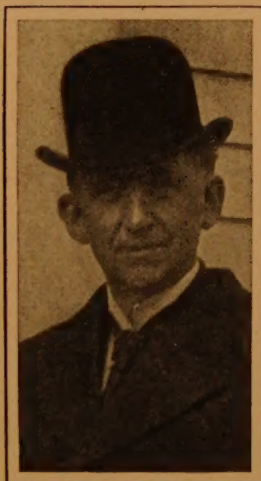




THE EARLY HOME OF WILL CARLETON  
Near Hudson, Michigan



WHERE THE POET WENT TO SCHOOL  
The schoolhouse was only a short distance from his home

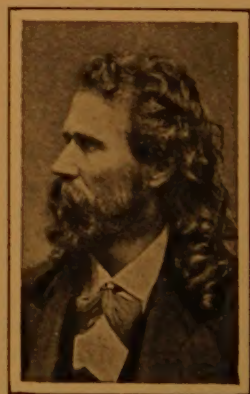


WILL CARLETON  
As he appeared in 1907 when  
revisiting his early home

neighborhoods. Every section of our land has had its minstrel, singing the history and honored tradition of his own people, or finding poetry in life's daily routine. A typical few we may consider closely, and in paying tribute to them do honor to the folk poetry of a nation that has always been ruled by sentiment and swayed by emotion.

## WILL CARLETON

A generation ago in most eastern farmhouses "Farm Ballads" was sure to be found among the well-thumbed books. In hundreds of little red schoolhouses "Over the Hills to the Poor House" was regularly declaimed from the plat-



JOAQUIN MILLER

form, while simple-hearted folk who crowded the little room to hear the "exercises" wiped their eyes or blew sonorous noses. Will Carleton, author of that poem and many others as quaintly sentimental, wrote in a preface to a new edition, "I comply with the request, wondering that the world has read, over and over again, this simple story of a good woman's suffering and her rescue from it by a bad but warm-hearted son."

And yet Carleton was not wholly surprised: he knew his audience. He was always successful as a reader and lecturer, particularly in rural neighborhoods.



"JOAQUIN MILLER" LOG CABIN

Now in Rock Creek Park, Washington, D. C., whither it was moved in 1912. The "Poet of the Sierras" lived at the capital in this cabin for three years previous to his return to California in 1885





"THE HEIGHTS"

The home of Joaquin Miller at Oakland, Cal.



JOAQUIN MILLER AND HIS DAUGHTER  
At their home in Oakland

He would tell of his own early life in country and city, and always preached patriotism and the homely virtues in frankest fashion.

Though he was living among us so recently, he always seemed to belong to another generation of simple living and old-fashioned courtesy. He wrote many volumes of verse, but "Farm Ballads," "Farm Legends," and "Farm Festivals" were the foundation and structure of his fame.

If art has no other test than that of human appeal, we shall be forced to ignore the crudities of Will Carleton's verses and call him artist. Thousands of poets have sung with more finished technic and touched fewer hearts!

Carleton's name comes first to mind among our many poets of the soil because he typifies a large group of writers, both men and women, not inspired to any degree, not finished in technic, and most of them forgotten after their own generation, but all voicing the poetry that lived in the hearts of a simple-hearted people.

## JOAQUIN MILLER

Four years before Carleton was born in Michigan, Cincinnati Hiner Miller was born in Indiana. Strange that out of such an imposing array of names should come "Joaquin!"

When he was nine years old he moved with his parents to Oregon; so the Pacific Slope claims Joaquin Miller, and the spirit of the Argonauts inspired his work. No minstrel ever



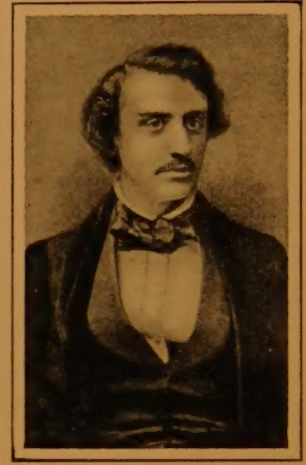
JOAQUIN MILLER

In the costume in which he posed for moving pictures





Courtesy, Houghton Mifflin Co.  
GRAND PLAZA, SAN FRANCISCO, IN 1852



Reproduced from "The Life of Bret Harte,"  
by T. E. Fernberton, through the courtesy  
of the publishers, Dodd, Mead & Co.

## BRET HARTE

From a daguerreotype taken when  
he was seventeen years old, and  
shortly before he set out for the  
Californian goldfields

earned a better right to sing of the traditions and spirit of his own people. Before he was thirty he had been miner, express messenger, country editor, and country judge. Adventures filled those years to overflowing; and as he came to write, emphasis and spirit marked his work. He was truly a "poet of the Sierras." In 1870 he went to London and there published "Songs of the Sierras." It brought him popularity and fame—and his remarkable personality added to his success. But he did not, like his great contemporary, Bret Harte, expatriate himself. The Sierras drew him back, and only the other day, it seems, he died in Oakland. Romances and plays invited his talent; but it is as a poet of his own soil that he is remembered.

Not many poets, even among those of greater genius, have received during lifetime the reward of honor and esteem that was given Joaquin Miller. For years he held court in his picturesque California home, on the estate that it was his delight to cultivate and develop. The latchstring always hung outward, and many were the guests that took advantage of his truly western hospitality. The spirit of that West fills his poems. His "Columbus" with its inspiring refrain, "Sail on, and on," known to school children everywhere, is a hymn of later argonauts as well. "To the Lion of Saint Mark" surely suggests a subject that should call him far enough afield; yet note the lines,—

"Why, sullen old monarch of stilled Saint Mark,  
Strange men of the West, wise-mouthed and strong,  
Will come some day . . . . ."

Some such poems as these will not die with his generation. They have become part of the tradition of the soil that he delighted to honor.



Courtesy, Houghton Mifflin Co.  
BRET HARTE IN 1861



# AMERICAN POETS OF THE SOIL

## BRET HARTE

Just as the stir of life beyond the Sierras in the '50's and '60's stimulated Joaquin Miller, so in greater degree did the life in San Francisco in the years following the rush of '49 stimulate Francis Bret Harte. Bret Harte, like Miller, was not native to the coast. He was born at Albany, N. Y.; and went to San Francisco when he was fifteen. Here he found human nature in the raw. There was no veneer. The community had not yet turned aside from digging and panning, winning and losing, long enough to look to its lawless community affairs.

It is as a story teller that Bret Harte painted the most thrilling pictures of that time.

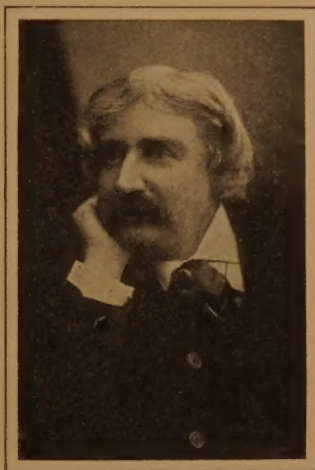
And yet we claim and hold him as a poet of the soil; for, truest of all in the rhymes and poems he has written, there are all the sharp contrasts and wide diversities to be found in that time and that people. The verses in the mouth of "Truthful James"

ring as true to the spirit of the time as do those poems that are full of the consciousness of the far-away struggle between North and South.

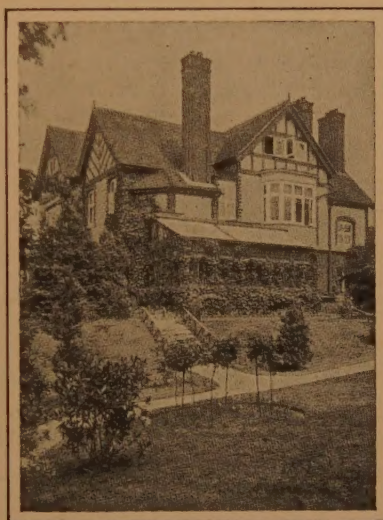
In 1868 San Francisco had her own literary magazine, the *Overland Monthly*, and through its pages Bret Harte, for a time its editor, became widely known. "The Luck of Roaring Camp" appeared here in 1868. This story and the poem popularly called "The Heathen Chinee" established his reputation. From 1871 to 1878 he lived in New York, and thereafter lived abroad.

## A NEW WESTERN LITERATURE

England, from the very first appearance of his verses in 1865, had given recognition to his genius. In fact, as he himself writes in an introduction to his collected works, his first undertakings depended for their recognition in California upon their success elsewhere. "The Luck of Roaring Camp" was actually put into print in the face of vigorous and shocked objection on the part of printer and proofreader, and its appearance aroused a storm of local protest. Yet this story and the dialect verses and fiction that had preceded it, were, as he says, "first efforts toward indicating a peculiarly characteristic western American literature."



BRET HARTE

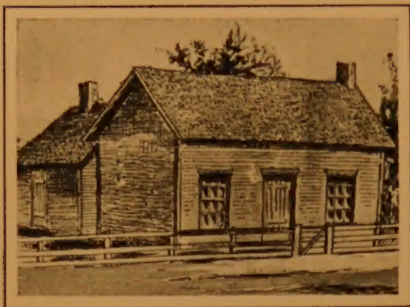


Reproduced from "The Life of Bret Harte," by T. E. Pemberton, through the courtesy of the publishers, Dodd, Mead & Co.

THE RED HOUSE, CAMBERLEY, SURREY, ENGLAND

The house in which Bret Harte died





THE BIRTHPLACE OF RILEY  
At Greenfield, Ind.

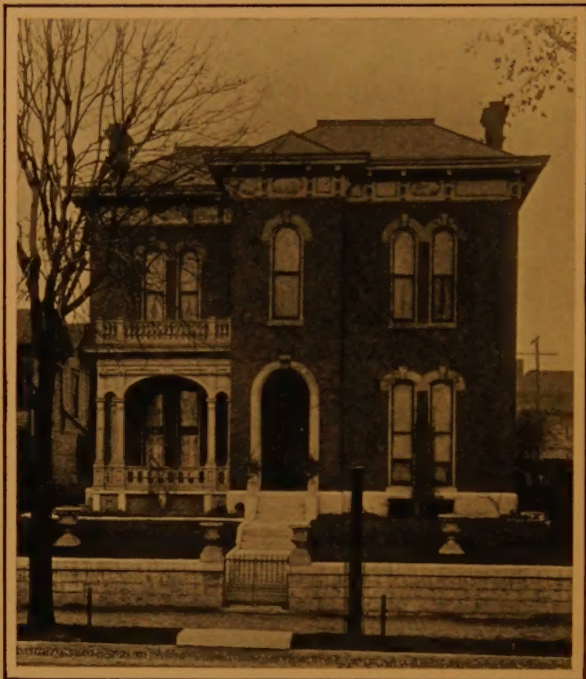
He had a "very early, half-boyish, but very enthusiastic belief" that such a literature was possible. Fortunately his magazine had already secured more than a local audience, and the immediate recognition of critics of greater discernment, perhaps because they were more remote, encouraged him to continue the literary course he had determined upon.

The turbulent days of the Forty-niner are past and gone; their bards are dead, but leaving behind them some poems and stories that will keep their memory and the memory of their times alive. After Bret Harte's first successes tribute of imitation was paid him all over the land. The affairs of the gold camp filled story and verse; and folk-poets here and there were quick to adopt his effective use of monologue in dialect poems. John Hay was one of these. His "Little Breeches" and other verses that depict so delightfully the Hoosier character of the time hold an enduring place among American poems of the soil.

#### FIELD AND RILEY

In the '80's and thereafter the phrase "American Folk Poets" would bring to mind at once Field and Riley. They have not so much in common that their names must always be linked; yet their appearances together on the lecture platform encouraged this popular habit of mind, and above all they both were at their best in poems of childhood.

To most of us who know by heart many of James Whitcomb Riley's poems, the name "Benj. F. Johnson of Boone" means nothing; yet



Courtesy, Bobbs-Merrill Co.  
RILEY'S HOME IN  
INDIANAPOLIS



JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



Riley's first dialect verses and even his first book appeared over that pen name.

### "AN OLD SWEETHEART OF MINE"

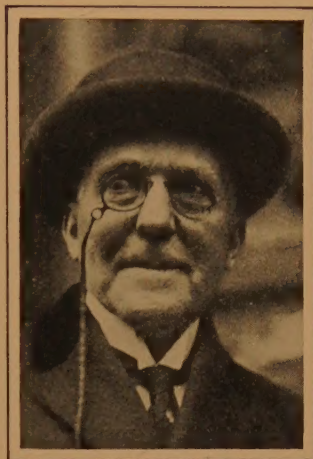
In 1873, when nineteen years old, he began contributing to Indiana papers, and his fame steadily grew, until as the "Hoosier Poet" he was known and loved throughout the nation. "The Old Swimmin' Hole" touched the hearts of men not alone of his own soil: wherever there were grown-ups who remembered boyhood joys it made appeal. "An Old Sweetheart of Mine" may have been an Indiana sweetheart; but she was also a lass of Maine, and of the South, and of the farthest West. In his verses of Hoosier childhood he proves that the children of all sections are close kin.

No poet ever had in his lifetime a sweeter tribute than had Riley, when the school children of his own state dedicated a day in which to do him honor.

It is important to emphasize the point that Riley, and Field as well, were "newspaper" poets; that is, a great deal of their work was done under newspaper pressure. Each of them wrote and published much that he himself did not care to preserve. But it is probable that this very fact made them both more truly "poets of the soil." They addressed, through such a medium, audiences made up of their own neighbors, men

and women whose hearts they read as truly as they could read their own. It has been said of Riley that he came nearer than anyone else to being an actual American poet laureate. No other American poet wrote so much "occasional" verse. National events, holidays, obituary occasions,—all found his pen ready with sympathy and understanding of the popular attitude.

Riley might even be called the laureate of American childhood, were it not for his friend Eugene Field. No American poet has written closer to the heart of a child—perhaps because the heart of a child was within him. Merry, tender, affectionate, he romped like a boy throughout his short life, revealing often that vein of sadness which



JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



Courtesy, Bobbs-Merrill Co.

THE BOY RILEY AND HIS MOTHER  
From a rare daguerreotype





From "Eugene Field," by Slason Thompson; copyright, 1901; published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE FIELD HOMESTEAD  
At Newfane, Vermont

every lover of children vaguely feels when he holds the clinging fingers of a child.

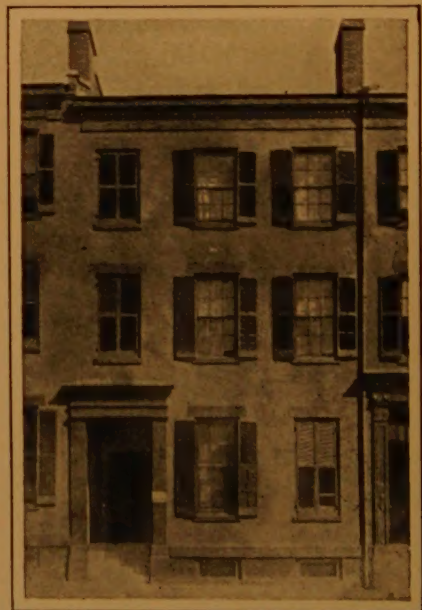
### FIELD, POET OF CHILDHOOD

Born in 1850, Field's first bit of verse was not written until 1879; and it was not until ten years later, and in the last six years of his life that he wrote verse frequently. That first poem was called "Christmas Treasures," and it strikes the key for much of his later singing:

"I count my treasures o'er with care—  
The little toy my darling knew;  
A little sock of faded hue,  
A little lock of golden hair.

....."

He belonged to the Middle West. Chicago had all his best years. He loved her spirit and laughed delightedly at her faults. His worldly wealth was in his friendships, and the story of his life in his home, his newspaper office, and with his neighbors makes of any human reader, even though he never knew him, an affectionate friend. Much that he wrote was inferior, and has been praised and preserved to his fame's later injury. But as the poet of American childhood the laurels are surely his. The children of Field's poems are chiefly of the country;



THE BOYHOOD HOME OF EUGENE FIELD  
At St. Louis, Mo.



they revel in hay-mows and are chummy with farm animals. Most of them belong to the New England countryside where Field's own boyhood was spent. Others are his own children. A strong personal note is always there, and deepens the effect of tenderness throughout the poems.

A note frequently sounded in Field's other verse is one of good-natured raillery and friendly sarcasm. That form of "culture" which displayed a polite veneer of foreign tongues received a great amount of his attention: he loved to misquote French and German. But all of his open amusement over society airs and affectation in his neighborhood never seemed to make him any enemies.

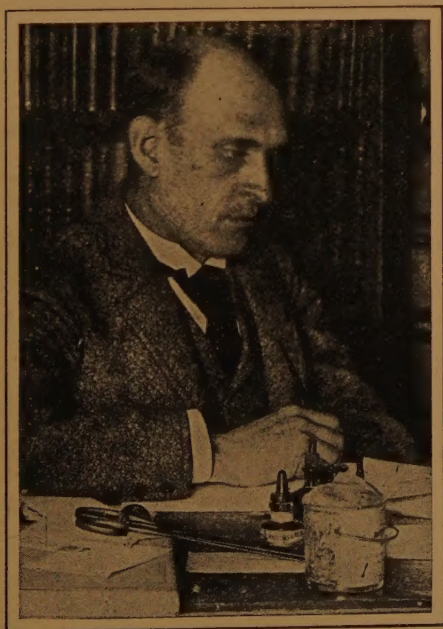
## EDWIN MARKHAM

The songs of the village and the farm have been mentioned; there are still the songs of our toilers. Their laureate may somewhere be now in the making. Charles Edwin Markham, in his "Man with the Hoe," has touched a chord that many others will finger, and many less skilfully.

Markham is still among us. If the East has given poets to the West who should grow up there absorbing the spirit of that country, the West has more than paid the debt by those she has sent in return. Edwin Markham was born in Oregon, and most of his life was spent on the Pacific Coast; but today his tall figure and leonine head are well known in New York. Many other poems of the soil and of toilers, besides the one that brought him greatest reputation, "The Man with the Hoe," give him rightful place in these pages.

Markham's style is dignified always, even stately. His thorough knowledge of ancient classic literature, and debt to it is constantly evident. But the dominant note of all his best and most sincere work is modern democracy. Men and women of definite socialistic belief have acclaimed him as a spokesman of their own. In California he was by profession an educator, and as a public school principal was in a position to study democracy in the very laboratory. Then literature was an avocation. But with his change of residence came a more definite acceptance of creative writing as a vocation, and an evidence of more definite social purpose—a "mission"—behind his work.

Time is a stern old critic: what he will say of Markham no one can now foretell. Perhaps he will be kind enough to choose one or two poems and decree that they shall live. He has been far less kind to many another poet of equal



EUGENE FIELD

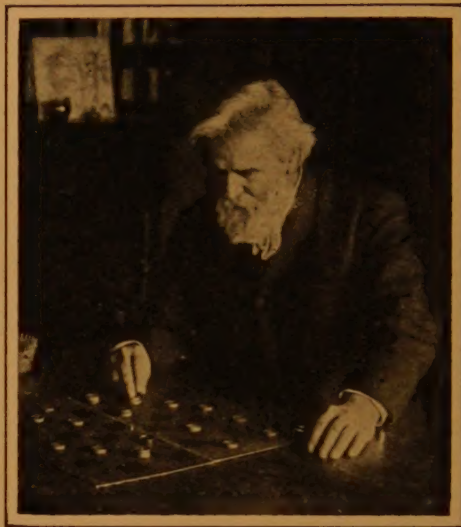


promise. But let Father Time be as cruel as he will, he cannot erase the effect that a true poet must surely have upon the folk of his own generation, and through them upon generations yet unborn.

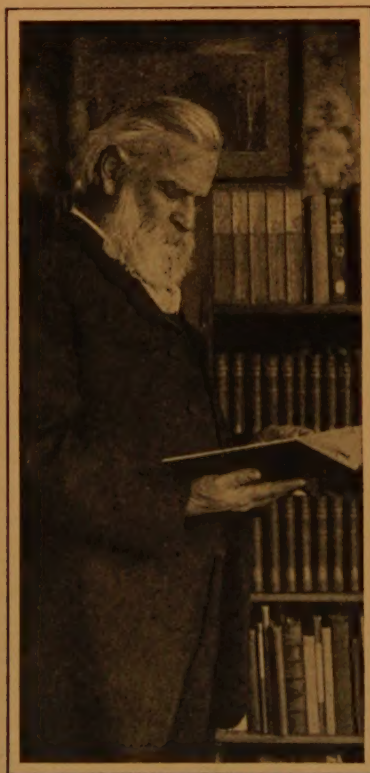
## A WIDENING INTEREST IN POETRY

Mountain, prairie, and farm—all these soils have reared their singers. That the fame of some will die is not so important: it is not solely for the measure of their fame that we have set down certain names. It is important to know that we nurture many such poets, and that it is in our hearts to honor them wherever they arise.

That they are arising in increasing numbers seems to be an undeniable fact. The testimony of our reviews, our book shops, even the current gossip of the street, would tend to prove not only the great number of



EDWIN MARKHAM PLAYING CHECKERS



EDWIN MARKHAM IN HIS LIBRARY

new voices but an ever widening audience. It would be an invidious distinction to name any two or three, without asserting again that we would indicate the growing numbers of clear voiced minstrels of our own soil, and make no effort toward a too-early choice among their songs. Lindsay, Masters, Frost, MacKaye, Benet, Lowell, and many others are finding their themes in the life immediately about them, and tuning their harps with the courage of inspiration.

Is there, after all, a new school of poets among them? Some, perhaps, are scorning the old rules of rhyme and rhythm, but who more than Whitman? Surely, when the passing years have wiped out the vague lines that are drawn now between adjacent generations, that shrewd old critic with the hour-glass and scythe will apply but two tests—*sincerity*, and power to reproduce in words the soul's sense of what is beautiful in life. Whittier and Whitman, Miller and Harte, Field and all these younger singers, are the poets of a people that have come to be a nation, sometime crude, feeling its way along, but always striving, and with a growing national





THE HOME OF EDWIN MARKHAM  
At Westerleigh Park, Staten Island, N. Y.

By such a natural growth a wealth of poetry has sprung from the American soil. The great continent has offered rich and varied material. Wide, sweeping prairie lands, broad rivers, lofty mountains, and great lakes and forests have contributed their share, and the glories of each have been expressed in song. The American homestead has been an inspiration. Perhaps in no other country are there so many happy little households and small communities offering varied types of homely character. The people living close to the soil have desired their poetry—just as they would have their votes, their seats in church, their country papers, their pianos and their phonographs—and a great throng of poetic singers has answered to their demand with very natural and unaffected voices.

sense of things beautiful. What matters it if these particular poets and many of their songs are soon forgotten. They are feeding the nation's soil for the certainty of richer harvests in the future.

As the distinguished critic, E. C. Stedman, has expressed it:

"Poetry, in its most spontaneous form, is a growth rather than an artifice," and poets, when the time is ripe and calls for them, spring up "as when in the physical world, the pines and fir-trees of a verdant forest have been cleared away, and a novel flora suddenly appears, whose germs have been hidden in the under-mold awaiting their own season of room and light and air."

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

THE LIFE OF BRET HARTE *By H. C. Merwin*

THE LIFE OF BRET HARTE  
*By T. E. Pemberton*

EUGENE FIELD Two vols. *By Slason Thompson*

THE EUGENE FIELD I KNEW  
*By Francis Wilson*

A delightful volume by the famous actor, who was an intimate friend of the poet.

COMPLETE WORKS OF JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY (six volumes) *Edited by E. H. Eitel*  
The "Biographical Edition," containing a sketch of Riley's life told in his own words.

A LITTLE JOURNEY TO THE HOME OF JOAQUIN MILLER *By Elbert Hubbard*  
POEMS (six volumes) *By Joaquin Miller*  
The "Bear Edition," including Miller's autobiography.

### MAGAZINE ARTICLES

THE WILD JOAQUIN *By Bailey Millard*  
The Bookman, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, December, 1908.

THE MUCH LOVED PERSONALITY OF JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY  
Current Literature, Vol. XLI, No. 2, August, 1906

\*\* Information concerning the above books may be had on application to the Editor of The Mentor.





"Editor of The Mentor, Dear Sir:

"I am a young bank clerk, and I am very fond of literature. I spend a good deal of my leisure time reading good books. I have talked about my books to some of my acquaintances and they call me a 'highbrow'—with an accent that sounds like ridicule. What is a 'highbrow' anyhow? Yours, T. L. S."

You ask your question in such a frank, simple, good natured way, that I should like to pass it on in its own words to those acquaintances of yours that have called you a "highbrow." You like good books—that is to your credit. It is for readers of your tastes that good books are made.

★ ★ ★

"Highbrow" is not a standard word. It is not in the dictionary, but it is a very common expression of the street today. There is no reason why its application to you should disturb you, for the expression is not so much one of *offense* as of *defense*. The man who calls you a "highbrow" is taking thought as much of himself as of you. By the term "highbrow" he sets you apart from the work-a-day world that he knows—and in which perhaps he is strong. He feels conscious of an essential difference in taste between you and himself, and in the term "highbrow" he finds an expression of that difference that justifies his own tastes and satirizes yours. When your friend calls you a "highbrow" he might even call himself a "lowbrow,"—thereby, good naturedly, tendering you the laurel wreath, while he takes the hardy thistle for himself.

★ ★ ★

You ask why your acquaintances call you "highbrow." It is not by your love of good reading, my friend, that you have come into your title. It is in *talking* about your reading. You may have a library well filled with standard literature. A fine library is quite a correct piece of property for any intelligent citizen. The possession of it will not lay you open to comment. But if you reveal a knowledge and an enthusiasm for literature in the presence of your acquaintances, you are likely to find yourself a "highbrow." You may have good pictures on your walls—

that is a part of the furnishing of any comfortable home. But if you disclose the fact that you understand and appreciate the fine art values of your pictures, you may be called a "highbrow." You may have classic scores on your music rack—they belong there. But if, perchance, you love the work of the classic composers and have an intelligent knowledge of them, you stand in great danger of being a musical "highbrow." You have become heir to the paper crown that your acquaintances have conferred on you simply by giving them too much of your confidence.

★ ★ ★

You ask for a definition of "highbrow." It is a colloquial expression, and it has come into use within the last twenty years. In its original meaning it was not an unfair term. It was applied to individuals who sought knowledge not in humility but in self-conceit—who made a cult of knowledge and who assumed an attitude toward their fellow beings like that of the Pharisee, who exclaimed: "I am thankful that I am not like unto the rest of these." Frequently coupled with the term "highbrow" was the word "precious," which was applied to one whose tastes and style were refined to the disappearing point, who breathed a higher, finer air than other men, and who made no secret of it. In such a sense, "highbrow" and "precious" served a real purpose in the English language, and served it well.

★ ★ ★

But the term "highbrow" has no longer any definite meaning. It has now come to be used in a loose way to define a difference in mental attitude and habit between two people. And so blunted has its point become that it often decries the individual that uses the term rather than the one towards whom it is directed. My good friend, you seem not to be sensitive under the impeachment of your acquaintances; but, if you are, you can readily escape mental discomfort. Talk to them only of things that interest them—or, better still, let them do the talking. Then you will have their approval.

*W. S. Moffat*





BRET HARTE



# American Poets of the Soil

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

Monograph Number One in The Mentor Reading Course



BRET HARTE loved the West and its people. Many therefore wonder why he spent the last years of his life away from the West of his stories and lived in the East and in England. In fact he was asked many times during his lifetime why he did not return to California. His reply was that the scenes which he had himself described and which he carried with him in memory were things of the past; and all the interest of those scenes was in the past.

Francis Bret (originally spelled Brett) Harte was not born in the West, but at Albany, N. Y., on August 25, 1839. His father was a professor of Greek at Albany College, and died during the boyhood of his son. Bret Harte, after a common school education, went with his mother to California at the age of seventeen. There he became a jack of all trades, but, contrary to the old saying, he became master of one—short story writing. At various times he was a teacher, miner, printer, express messenger, secretary of the San Francisco Mint, and editor.

The first bit of writing that Bret Harte attempted was a series of Condensed Novels, which were published weekly in the *Californian*, of which he was the editor. These were travesties of well-known works of fiction. They were re-issued in book form in 1867.

Harte married Miss Anna Griswold on August 11, 1862.

In 1868 the *Overland Monthly*, the earliest important literary magazine on the Pacific Coast, was established. Harte was the editor of this. His sketches and poems which appeared in its pages during the next few years attracted wide attention both in the Eastern States and in Europe.

It was as a short story writer, however, that Bret Harte did his best work. His "Tales of California" introduced a fresh, vigorous, new note into fiction. Among the tales that made him famous were "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," and "How Santa Claus Came to Simpson's Bar." People saw that there had arrived one who could tell vividly of this new land of miners, gamblers, and picturesque landscapes, and one who combined humor, pathos, and power in his writing.

There are many interesting anecdotes told of Bret Harte, for he not only wrote of the life of the West, but he lived it himself. In the later part of his life his hair was snow white. He attributed this to the continued influence of fear while an express messenger. Several of his predecessors had been shot by robbers, and he declared that he never mounted the stage-coach without some apprehension of a dark glen, a flash and report therefrom, and a tumble from the seat.

Bret Harte wrote a great deal. Forty-four volumes were published by him between 1867 and 1898. He was professor in the University of California for one year. He moved to New York in 1871 and lived there until 1878. During the next two years he was United States Consul at Crefeld, Germany, and from 1880 to 1885 Consul at Glasgow. Thereafter he lived in London, engaged in literary work. Bret Harte died at Camberley, England, on May 5, 1902.





JOAQUIN MILLER



# American Poets of the Soil

## JOAQUIN MILLER

Monograph Number Two in The Mentor Reading Course



WHEN a boy in Oregon Joaquin (Yo-ah'-keen) Miller ran away from school to the mines of California; and it has been said that he dodged civilization ever after. "From my boyhood I have wanted to be a liberated human being," he once said, "and I think I have come about as near to that as anybody in the world."

Joaquin Miller, whose name, by the way, was Cincinnatus Heine Miller, was born in Indiana, on November 10, 1841. He had intended to study law, but when he threw off the shackles of the Oregon school he went South and fell in with a wild Indian fighter called Mountain Joe. They prospected together, but Miller returned home with little material benefits to show for it. His time had not altogether been wasted, however, for out of those years came the wild, crude, yet wonderful "Songs of the Sierras."

Before this was published, Miller had settled down in Oregon and become a judge in 1866. It was during this period that he first began to write the poetry that later was to make him famous.

His first book, "Specimens," was praised by Bret Harte; but, said Miller, "My lawyer friends laughed at it, which, however, only made me the more determined, and the next year I published 'Joaquin et al.' The name Joaquin was thus given to me by kind friends who saw in my poetry only something to deride. Strange to say, I afterward prefixed it to my name, and dropped forever the cumbersome 'Cincinnatus Heine' with which my well-meaning parents had loaded me."

In 1870 Miller went to London and published there "Songs of the Sierras," which was well received. Then he returned to the United States and spent several years as a newspaper man in Washington, D. C. In 1887 he returned to California, and lived there until his death, on February 17, 1913.

Miller wrote some plays, one of which, "The Danites in the Sierras," had a measure of success as a melodrama. He was also a correspondent for the New York Journal in the Klondike during the gold rush in 1897-98.

An interesting fact about Joaquin Miller was his rather neat method of self-advertising. When he found that the Londoners appreciated him most in the character of a Wild Westerner, he clothed himself in appropriate scout costume and posed in that character. In this way he soon had all literary London talking of the new Western poet. He wore his hair and beard very long, and attracted much attention—which he thoroughly enjoyed. Miller was the only poet of any prominence that ever appeared in vaudeville.

One of his friends writes that he once saw him "walk down the street, his tall, rather slender, figure clad in a khaki suit, bound around with a red, gold fringed sash; his trousers stuffed into a pair of tassled top boots, and his long hair topped by a red turkish fez."

A pleasant anecdote is told of the poet. A pretty young wife begged him to write an autograph for her. He did so, but, so bad was the handwriting, neither the young wife nor her husband could make out a word. But they thanked Miller profusely, and after he had gone, called in a friend who was familiar with the poet's writing. They then deciphered the following tender lines:

"May all your life be love, love,  
And all your life be song,  
For life is none too long, love;  
And, love is none too long!"



WILL CARLETON



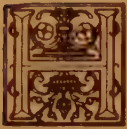
# American Poets of the Soil

WILL CARLETON

Monograph Number Three in The Mentor Reading Course

"Out of the old house, Nancy—moved up into the new;  
All the hurry and worry is just as good as through.  
Only a bounden duty remains for you and I—  
And that's to stand on the doorstep here, and bid the old house good-by.

"Fare you well, old house! you're naught that can feel or see,  
But you seem like a human being—a dear old friend to me;  
And we never will have a better home, if my opinion stands,  
Until we commence a-keepin' house in the house not made with hands."



ARDLY any poem by Will Carleton shows more clearly the natural tenderness and pathos of his work than the one from which these two verses are taken,—“Out of the Old House, Nancy.” He struck this vein by instinct, and pursued it with great success.

Will Carleton was born at Hudson, Michigan, on October 21, 1845. He attended Hillsdale college, and in 1869 graduated with the degree of B. S. Later on his college awarded him the degrees of A. M. and Litt. D.

After leaving college Carleton took up newspaper work in Hillsdale, Michigan. Then he went to Detroit, and later worked on various newspapers in Chicago and Boston, finally coming to New York. At last he became editor of “Everywhere,” a monthly magazine published in Brooklyn, where he made his home. “Everywhere” was a small, old fashioned magazine whose pages were largely devoted to poetry. Some of the best known of his later poems appeared in this publication.

In addition to his literary work, Carleton was a very successful lecturer. He gave readings from his own works throughout the United States and Europe. Of his poems, “Betsy and I Are Out” is probably the best known. It was published in the Toledo Blade in 1871, and was reprinted in nearly every newspaper in the country. It was in the same year that he issued his first volume of poems. A year or so later his second volume, “Farm Ballads,” appeared. This was a collection of dialect poems. Within eighteen months 40,000 copies had been sold.

Will Carleton had a happy knack of attracting the reader by the simplicity of his themes and their pathetic or humorous appeal. He died on December 18, 1912; and at the time of his death one critic said of him:

“With the passing of Will Carleton, America loses the most popular of her poets and the one whose writings have been more widely read and appreciated than those of any poet since the days of Whittier and Longfellow. There is hardly an English-speaking home in America—it might almost be said in the English-speaking world—where ‘Over the Hills to the Poorhouse’ and ‘Betsy and I Are Out’ are unknown. Will Carleton’s works still command heavy sales, and selections from his poems have long ago been incorporated into popular anthologies. As a lecturer Carleton was well known throughout this country, and if he occupied a comparatively small space in the columns of the periodical press it was because he had been known so long that he had become accepted as an institution. He was little discussed because he had passed into history ”



EUGENE FIELD



# American Poets of the Soil

EUGENE FIELD

Monograph Number Four in The Mentor Reading Course

"The little toy dog is covered with dust,  
But sturdy and stanch he stands;  
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,  
And his musket moulds in his hands.  
Time was when the little toy dog was new,  
And the soldier was passing fair;  
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue  
Kissed them and put them there.

And they wonder, as waiting the long years through  
In the dust of that little chair,  
What has become of our Little Boy Blue,  
Since he kissed them and put them there."



THE poet that wrote these tender lines wrote also two of the best known American humorous poems, "The Little Peach," and "Casey's Table d'hôte." He was Eugene Field, who was born at St. Louis, Missouri, on September 2, 1850.

The boyhood of Eugene Field was spent for the most part in Vermont and Massachusetts. For short periods he studied at Williams and Knox colleges; later on he attended the University of Missouri, but he did not take a degree. For a time he worked as a journalist on various newspapers, notably the Denver Tribune, where he made his first reputation as a poet and paragrapher. From Denver he was coaxed to a good position on the Chicago News. In that newspaper he conducted a column of mingled seriousness and humor, which he called "Sharps and Flats." He was among the pioneers of those "Column Conductors," who have since become institutions in American Journalism. Field soon became famous as an extraordinary combination of original literary quality, genial wit, and audacity.

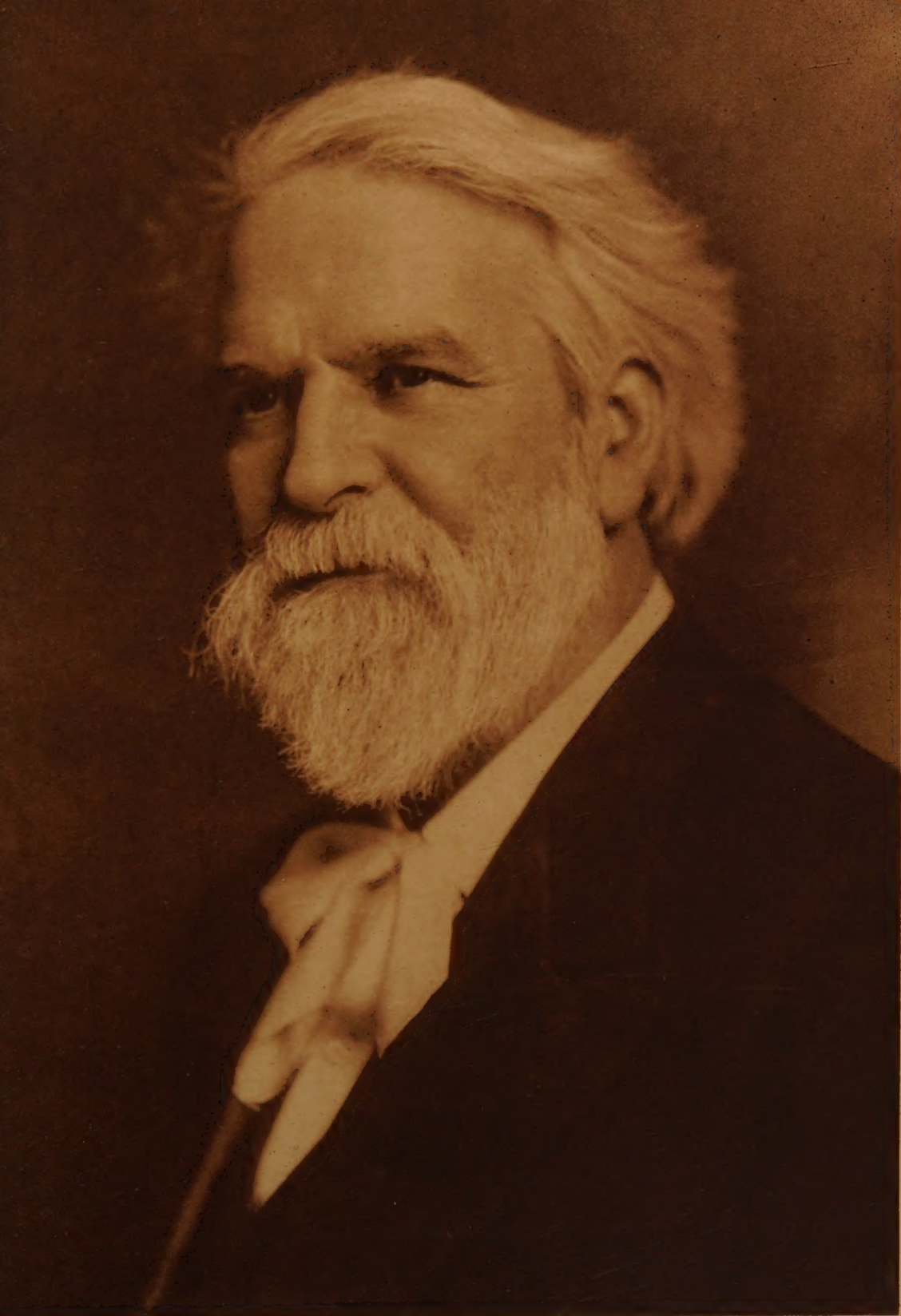
It was while serving on the News that Eugene Field published his first little book. This was entitled "Culture's Garland," and Edmond Clarence Stedman, the American banker and poet, had a great deal to do with its publication. Stedman, attracted by the work of Field, wrote to his own Boston publisher, suggesting to him a book of verse by Field. This publisher arranged with the Chicago poet to put out his little book. Then Field, having been informed of Stedman's interest in the project, wanted him to write a preface for it. But Stedman would not do this.

Eugene Field was delighted at the appearance of his book; but later on his attitude towards this early volume changed. In fact he was so displeased with it in the latter part of his life that he tried to destroy all available copies.

His friendship with Stedman, however, begun at this time, was only severed by the death of Field.

In 1889 Field's "A Little Book of Profitable Tales," was published. His place in literature, however, chiefly depend upon his poems of childhood. His poetry joins with sentiment a fluently musical style. Some of his better known collections of poems are "A Little Book of Western Verse"; "With Trumpet and Drum"; and "Love Songs of Childhood," published the year before his death.

Eugene Field died very suddenly in Chicago on November 4, 1895, leaving a wife and family. He was one of the most interesting figures in American literature. By nature he was an incorrigible and incurable boy, as full of mischief as of talent. His heart ever remained young and all children loved him.



EDWIN MARKHAM



# American Poets of the Soil

EDWIN MARKHAM

Monograph Number Five in The Mentor Reading Course



EDWIN MARKHAM is one of the most venerable and honored of American poets. He has placed himself high in the regard of those who value and appreciate poetic achievement, and he is loved as a man as well as a poet by all who have come in touch with his personality. He has enjoyed life in the richest sense of the phrase. His poetry has never been tedious, and two of his poems will forever stand in our literature as valiantly American. These are "Lincoln" and "The Man With The Hoe."

Charles Edwin Markham was born at Oregon City, Oregon, on April 23, 1852. In 1857 his family moved to California, where the boy worked at farming and blacksmithing. He also herded cattle and sheep during his youth.

He received his preparatory school education at the San José Normal School, and later attended two western colleges. At college he specialized in the study of ancient and modern literature. He also paid a great deal of attention to Christian sociology. In 1897 Markham married and then became a principal and later superintendent of schools in California, until 1899. It was in this year that he wrote "The Man With The Hoe," a poem which received world wide attention. Many proclaimed it "the battle cry of the next thousand years." Markham since boyhood had written poems for the California papers, and he had received recognition in the best Eastern magazines. But "The Man With The Hoe" was the poem that made his reputation as a poet.

Then came "Lincoln" and other poems. Markham has also written a number of essays and a series of magazine articles covering the problem of child labor. For the last few years he has been engaged in selecting and editing the writings of Thomas Lake Harris, the American spiritualistic "prophet."

Edwin Markham is a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Although born in the West, he now makes his home in New York State. We may apply to the poet himself the following lines taken from his poem on "Lincoln":

"The conscience of him testing every stroke,  
To make his deed the measure of a man."

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JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



# American Poets of the Soil

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Monograph Number Six in The Mentor Reading Course

"Dethery-tethery! down in the dike,  
Under the—under the ooze and the slime,  
Nestles the wraith of a reticent Gryke,  
Blubbering bubbles of rhyme."



HE author of these lines has received the honorary degree of Master of Arts from Yale, Doctor of Letters from two other universities, and Doctor of Laws from still another. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and has been honored by the people of his State to a greater extent perhaps than their most influential political leaders. Probably after knowing these facts the reader will look for some occult meaning in the four lines quoted. Vain effort. They were not intended to have any sense. The lines were published in a country newspaper under the title of "Wrangdillion" when James Whitcomb Riley was just making his entrance into literature. The verse is rhythmical nonsense and is not intended to be anything else.

James Whitcomb Riley was born on October 7, 1853, at Greenfield, Indiana, a small town twenty miles from Indianapolis. His first home was a log cabin. Riley's father, who was a country lawyer, wanted him to become one also. This did not appeal to the boy, and after a short course at the village school he ran away from home with a patent medicine and concert wagon. His duty was to beat the bass drum. Then he became a sign painter, later drifting back to Greenfield in connection with a local newspaper. Finally, when this failed, he went to Indianapolis and joined the staff of the Journal of that city.

It was in 1873 that he began to contribute to various newspapers his poems in the Hoosier dialect. These gained him considerable notice. For a while he used the pen name of "Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone." He soon became local editor of the Democrat at Anderson, Indiana.

In August, 1877, there appeared in the Kokomo, Indiana, Dispatch a poem entitled "Leonaine." This was signed with the initials E. A. P. and was accompanied by a statement from the editor of the paper that it was "from the gifted pen of the erratic poet Edgar Allen Poe," and by a story to the effect that the poem had been found written on the fly-leaf of an old Latin-English Dictionary then owned by "an uneducated and illiterate man" in Kokomo who had received it from his grandfather, in whose tavern near Richmond, Virginia, it had been left by "a young man who showed plainly the marks of dissipation."

This poem was widely copied and critics accepted it as a genuine poem by Poe. One critic, however, refused to accept the story. This was the critic of the Anderson Democrat. He happened to be James Whitcomb Riley, and rival papers said that his doubts were instigated by jealousy. At last the controversy assumed such huge proportions that the editor of the paper in which "Leonaine" first appeared confessed that he and Riley, who really wrote the poem, had perpetrated a joke. In spite of this fact the poem is an excellent piece of work.

In 1863 Riley published his first book, "The Old Swimmin' Hole and 'Leven More Poems." He also wrote short stories and sketches; but he is known almost exclusively as a poet. One of the sweetest and most loved of all his poems is "An Old Sweetheart of Mine." And yet Riley, himself, has remained a bachelor.

Riley won great fame as a lecturer. He and Bill Nye, the humorist, made successful tours. Today Riley lives in Indianapolis, loved and honored by his fellow countrymen to whom he has given so much pleasure by the delicate imagination, humor and tenderness of his verses.